

THE HINDENBURG LINE FROM A DOUGHBOY'S POINT OF VIEW

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Among the many records of the 30th Division now on file with the North Carolina Historical Commission is the following description of his experiences by Corporal James E. Gregory, Company M, 119th Infantry. Corporal Gregory, the son of Mr. And Mrs. W. J. Gregory, was born in Newland township, Pasquotank county, N. C. May 15, 1896. He was called into service through the draft September 20, 1917, as one of the first men in his county to go, and was transferred from the National Army at Camp Jackson, S. C., to the National Guard at Camp Sevier, S. C. Corporal Gregory's experience typifies that of thousands of young North Carolinians who waited for the call to service with full faith in the system of Selective Service, and eager courage for action. His story follows:

"On the second day of July, 1918, we began our hike for the front. After five days of hiking with eighty-pound packs, we stopped within ten miles of the Ypres front in Belgium at Kemmel Hill. Here for two weeks we trained and got somewhat acquainted with the sound of big guns and German air raids.

"On the 24th of July we went to the front and with the British 4th Army helped to hold the front line. The first day was fairly quiet, but the second was rough. When I saw two of my best pals killed and I had to help carry one of them out with his head blown off, I decided Sherman was right when he said 'War is hell.' That night we were relieved by another company of our boys and we went out to rest-a few days later and the Division was out for a rest. After five days of rest we were sent back to the lines to relieve the British. This time we let 'Old Jerry' know who was there. The 27th American Division at our right went over the top and captured Kemmel Hill. Our Division went over with them and advanced the line even with the 27th, which was about one thousand yards. Then being relieved by the Scotch Highlanders, we went out for another rest and were sent to the Somme front in France to help the Australians break the famous Hindenburg Line at Bellicourt. Here we learned we were used as storm troops for the English 4th Army.

"At 5:50 a.m., September 29th, our Division attacked the Hindenburg Line on a front of three thousand yards. For four long hours the barrage continued without one minute of let up from both sides. It looked to me as if the destruction of the world had begun. I couldn't hear myself think, shells were falling everywhere, and shrapnels filling the air with their horrible whistles, and men were moaning and groaning at every side, pleading for someone to help them. German prisoners were coming over with hands up yelling 'Kamerad,' enemy aeroplanes whizzing low to the earth and sending showers of bullets down on us, friends everywhere falling dead and wounded. I was in a continuous struggle for life and almost unconscious of what was really happening, when the hardest of the battle was over and we had reached our objective, the tunnel of St. Quentin and the entire Hindenburg Line at Bellicourt. We spent the night in a German dugout seventy feet under ground, where the night before Hindenburg's men never dreamed of having to give up.

"On the morning of the 30th we began to gather up the remainder of the dead and wounded. Horrible sights were to be seen. I saw men piled beside the shell-torn road in piles of from two to a dozen, and Australians hauling men to bury in wagons like we haul wood-a dozen or fifteen to a load. At the burying ground some of the men could not be identified for only half a man could be found, sometimes his body being blown to pieces and the identification tag lost.

"On October 1st we were relieved by the Australians, having captured 1,434 men and 47 officers and advanced 4,200 yards. We went out to back areas for a well-earned rest which we never got. On the 5th we were started back to the front to relieve the Australians. On October 9th I went over the top twice. We captured two small villages. One I remember was Busigny. Just before we entered the village we ran into a machine gun nest and several of our boys were killed. H. L. Myers of my squad fell severely wounded and called for help. I